

before knowing the results of his prayer service. Such an example should be a mighty stimulus to thousands of others who are unable, for some reason, to come directly in contact with his fellows and personally influence them in favor of Christ. Whether confined by work or by illness you can perform an invaluable service for others in your prayers to God for them.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

R. R. TEETER

Paul says to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." There are several thoughts suggested by these words, any one of which will furnish nutritious food for reflection. We are at once impressed with the responsibility resting upon those who try to preach or to apportion the precious gems of God's word among the human family.

There seem to have been in nearly all periods of the history of the Christian church persons who did not realize the meaning of rightly dividing the word of truth and did not understand their own inability to do the same. A certain English bishop upon hearing for the first time the doctrine that God is a spirit exclaimed, "I thought I knew something about God, but, if he be a spirit I know nothing." And no doubt he never spoke more truthful words. The old doctrine, that it matters not how ignorant or unlearned one may be the ordination and laying on of hands by the presbytery gives him power to interpret the word of God, has long since been discarded by thoughtful men. And necessity of learning and education has been recognized, and more and more is it becoming understood that unless one wants to be ashamed of his workmanship he must apply himself to diligent study.

Not only is it necessary to study the word, but before the word can be understood properly one must have a fund of information and knowledge of other things. It is necessary that one should have a fair knowledge of the principles of language and of the laws of thought. It is right and proper to depend upon the Spirit to do all that it is intended for him to do in leading into all truth and in giving understanding of spiritual things but it is not the work of the Spirit to give one the meaning of words and explain the laws of language. Though the Spirit's work is indispensable it will not take the place of a good vocabulary and a knowledge of language and of systematic thought acquired only by diligent study. While these principles are generally accepted there are always a few who do not see their importance, and blundering along in their own bigoted self-confidence in their natural ability

they only confirm the principles just stated.

The impossibility to sensibly interpret scripture without a knowledge of the meaning of words and phrases is illustrated in the case of a young minister who was given Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," and told to interpret the phrase "shall also quicken your mortal bodies" and who did so by answering, "It means it will cause you to hustle up and get a move on yourself." This young man places a higher value upon his *natural* ability than upon a college education to help him preach the gospel or rightly divide the word of truth.

If, now, the necessity of study and preparation to rightly divide the word of truth has been made clear, let us look further to discover, if possible, what this dividing includes.

Quite a little speculation has been given to the source of this figure and the use of the original word translated rightly dividing, but the most practical interpretation seems to be that Timothy is to continue in the *true* doctrine, teach that to every person; and, according to our Lord's simile, giving each his portion of meat in due season; milk to babes; strong meat to the full grown; comfort to the disconsolate; reproof to the irregular and careless; in a word, finding out the necessities of his hearers; and preaching so as to meet those necessities. The truth in God's word covers every need of man in any circumstance of life, but too often we receive no benefit because we have not received our *proper* portion. The truth may have been divided and a portion of meat given to us when the condition of our spiritual stomach will digest nothing but milk, and at other times we may have had portions of milk handed out to us long after we have reached the age and ability to assimilate solid spiritual food.

The failure of one congregation to develop great spiritual strength may be attributed to the one dividing the truth failing to give it stronger food as needed, and the sluggish, bilious condition of another may have come from indigestion brought on by over-feeding upon meat too strong for its condition. This again emphasizes the necessity of study,—study to know the word, study to know the people, study to know what portion of the word to feed them. A sermon full of divine truth, producing wonderful results for God in one congregation may prove a flat failure in another because the one dividing the truth has not given the right portion.

We may think we are rightly dividing the word when we place great stress up-

on the ordinances and their keeping, but this is only a *small* portion of the truth that needs to be divided out among the people. One cannot be said to be rightly dividing the word of truth unless he continue in all the doctrines of our Lord and apply them to practical life so that they produce practical results.

This can be done only by having a correct knowledge of the truth and this knowledge can be obtained only through careful study and much prayer, but prayer alone will not give us the knowledge, study must come first and even the most effective prayer must spring from careful study of one's needs.

It seems to me the world would receive Christianity much more readily, if those who are trying to divide the word of truth would be more truthful, show more wisdom, and exercise more judgment in the apportioning of it.

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CHRISTIANITY AS A FACTOR IN CIVILIZATION

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If civilizing influences are to be judged by their fruits, Christianity stands without a peer as a factor in civilization. By inspiring progress in the individual, it has inspired progress in national life. It has imparted a new impulse to art, literature, science and philosophy, and is at this moment carrying the elements of the highest civilization to the ends of the earth.

It has presented to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has proved itself adapted to every age and nation, and to every condition of life; which has been the highest pattern of virtue and the greatest incentive to its practice; which has exerted the greatest influence in the development of a perfect manhood and the realization of faultless social conditions.

Confined to no race or nation, it passed territorial boundaries as freely as the breezes of heaven. When it entered Europe, such was the condition of the age that in imperial Rome, the center of intellectual and political power, even the philosophers and statesmen were addicted to the grossest vices. Benevolence was unknown; the helpers received neither justice nor mercy. In all the pagan world there was no hospital, asylum or organized charity of any sort. Religion was a creature of the state. It taught no system of doctrine, recognized no system of morals. By showing a little outward respect to their worship, a man could stand perfectly well with the gods, no matter to what extent he indulged the lowest propensities of his nature. The missionaries of the Cross held up the perfect standard of the Christ life, teaching repentance and purity of life, teaching the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Like the hidden